

The LAY-MONK.

Nihil est quod Deus efficere non potest & quidem sine labore ullo.
Tully.

From MONDAY, December 14. to WEDNESDAY, December 16. 1713.

THE Power of Operation, as Philosophers observe, follows the Nature and Essence of the Being; and as we cannot conceive the Essence of any Creature without the Principles of Activity and Motion suitable to their Natures, 'tis impossible to form the Idea of an Infinite Being, without ascribing to him Infinite Strength and Vigour. The greater Degree of Excellence any Being possesses, the larger Measure of Ability 'tis endow'd with. The Sun, by reason of the Vastness of his Body, and the Energy of his Nature, has a Power to illuminate and warm to a prodigious Distance and an intense Degree. But supposing this glorious Creature had been made of a far larger Size, and had an innate Capacity to diffuse its Heat and Light in a much greater Proportion than it now does; or suppose, were it possible, that those Essential Properties were Infinite, then since all Things act according to their Measure of Being, he would infinitely heat and enlighten the World. Hence 'tis evident, that since the Divine Nature is Infinite, his Force and Principle of Operation must be so too; the Reason is, because his Power is indeed his Essence, conceiv'd as exerted and efficacious in producing Things without himself. If the Sphere of his Activity is not unlimited, it must be bounded by some foreign Power, or by his own Will; the first cannot be true, for then there would be an Agent superior to the Supreme Being, and capable of controuling him; nor can the last be granted, for the Divine Being is unable to will the Absence of any Excellence from his Nature, for that would be to decree his own Imperfection and Unhappiness.

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All the numerous Beings of the Universe derive the various Perfections they possess from this exhaustless Source of Power and Excellence. Their Original is from nothing; and as at the Divine Call they step'd into Being, they owe to him all the Properties and Endowments of their Nature, as well as their Existence. All the Kinds and Degrees of Perfection, dispers'd with infinite Variety among created Beings, are Streams at first deriv'd, and still fed from the Fountain of Being, which tho' communicated to the Creature, are not independent, and separated from the first Cause, but are still the Creator's Perfections existing in his Creatures; and as all the Beams of Wisdom and Knowledge, that enlighten human Understandings, are Emanations emitted, and constantly supply'd from the Father of Light; and as all the Goodness and Benevolence that are found diffus'd thro' the whole Creation, are communicated from his immense Stores, so all the different Degrees of Force and Vigour inherent in all the Ranks of Beings in the Universe owe their Original to the same Cause. And since 'tis impossible that any Thing can impart or convey to another what it self never possess'd, the original Cause must enjoy in a transcendent Manner, and a more eminent Degree, all the Energy and Strength of every Thing which he brought into Being. The Powers, Vigours and Principles of Motion, existing distinctly in all the Individuals, from the Creature of the highest Order to the meanest Atome, are collected in the Author, the immense Ocean of Perfection.

All

All created Beings are endow'd with some Principles of Activity, and in that Degree, of which their different Natures and Capacities are receptive, distributed to them by the Supreme Oeconomist of the World. The Sun, by spreading his Treasures of Light, illuminates and warms the Air, and communicates his prolific Influences to the Bowels of the Earth, and the Depths of the Sea, to which so many Creatures owe their Birth. With what wonderful Energy has the Creator endow'd a small vegetable Seed, that it should shoot up its lofty Head, spread abroad its Branches, and produce by its fruitful Activity new Seeds like it self, which can still propagate the Species, and multiply themselves into numberless Plants. Suppose the Strength of the Elephant and Whale, the Rhinoceros and the Crocodile, and all other Principles of Motion, that are found among inanimate, brute and rational Beings, were lodg'd in one single Subject, would not such a Strength be stupendous, and confound all Conception? But to go higher: Consider the Force and Agility of an Angel, who, as the Royal Poet says, *excels in Strength*; if the Power of one Angel be so admirable, what is that of many Thousands? And how much superior is that of all the mighty and numberless Host of Heaven? Suppose that all the Vigour and Ability dispens'd in such immense Portions to each Individual of these excellent Beings, the eldest Sons of GOD, were united in one of that Species, what human Understanding stretch'd to its utmost Extent would be able to grasp so vast an Idea of Power? Now all the Strength collected in this imagin'd Angel is actually existent in the Author of their Order, and in a Degree infinitely superior to that of this suppos'd Seraph, who being still of a limited Nature, would not excel the most contemptible Worm, so much as himself would be surpass'd by the Supreme Being. There is some Proportion between the most despicable and the most excellent Creature, both being finite and dependent, but there is none between the most glorious Creature and his infinite Author.

The Sphere of Omnipotence, however unlimited, is not extended to any Action that denotes moral Deformity, for that would by no Means be a Demonstration of Power, but of Weakness and Imperfection; nor to the doing of any Thing inconsistent with or destructive of it self, or so contrary and repugnant to the Nature of Things, that it implies an evident Contradiction: For Instance, it is not possible to Almighty Power to make a Thing past not to have ever been; to cause a Thing to be out of Being, while it is actually in Being; to make what is essentially good

evil, and what is true false; for this would be to make two Things exist together, which of Necessity destroy one another, which is insignificant, and produces no Effect at all. Those who affirm, that 'tis in the Power of GOD to remove the Opposition and Repugnancy between the two Terms of a Contradiction, that they should not clash and ruin one another, assert only an inefficacious and unfruitful Energy; for since those two Terms united are absolutely destructive of each other, neither of them can exist, and therefore no Production follows, which indeed is doing nothing. And therefore those Disputants, who are so hard driven, that in the Defence of any Doctrine in Religion they are compell'd to fly to this Refuge, That Omnipotence can effect a Thing, the doing of which involves a Contradiction, offer the highest Affront to the Understanding of Mankind, by advancing such ridiculous Notions, as unactive Activity, and omnipotent Idleness: This is to affirm that Almighty Power can reconcile Light and Darkness, make Sense and Nonsense, Absurdities and self-evident Truths the same Things.

'Tis yet farther evident, that the Supreme Being is endow'd with Almighty Power from this Reflection, that were he not, all his other Attributes would be useless. To what Purpose should infinite Wisdom form Designs, if Power were wanting to put them in Execution? Impotent Goodness would be but an empty Benevolence, an unoperative kind Nature, willing but unable to make others happy. How could Justice unarm'd with Might terrify the Criminal with threaten'd Punishments, or support the Vertuous with the Expectation of promis'd Rewards? So that if Omnipotence should be remov'd from the Divine Nature, it would carry along with it all the other Attributes and Perfections, and by that entirely destroy the Idea of a Deity.

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